

Message Text

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ACTION SS-30

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R 111825Z OCT 74

FM AMEMBASSY ATHENS

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 5884

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 ATHENS 7463

EXDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, GR

SUBJECT: MEETING WITH MAVROS: PRE-ELECTORAL PERIOD

1. IN A PRIVATE MEETING I HAD TODAY WITH FOREIGN MINISTER MAVROS, I ASKED HIM HOW HE SAW THE PRE-ELECTORAL PERIOD DEVELOPING AND WHAT THE MAJOR ISSUES WOULD BE. MAVROS SAID THE NUMBER ONE ISSUE BY FAR WAS THE QUESTION OF THE "PURGE". BY THIS HE MEANT THE MATTER OF WHETHER AND HOW FAR THERE WOULD BE AN ERADICATION FROM THE MILITARY ESTABLISHMENT AND OTHER ORGANIZED STRUCTURES IN GREECE OF THOSE INDIVIDUALS WHO HAD BEEN SUPPORTIVE OR COLLABORATED CLOSELY WITH THE MILITARY REGIME DURING THE PAST SEVEN YEARS. HE SAID HE EXPECTED THIS ISSUE TO HEAT UP CONSIDERABLY OVER COMING DAYS AND IT WOULD BE AN ESPECIALLY DIFFICULT ONE FOR HIM AND CARAMANLIS. IF THEY PROMISED TOO LITTLE BY WAY OF A PURGE, THEY WOULD OPEN THEMSELVES TO VERY VIGOROUS ATTACKS AND CRITICISM FROM THE LEFT. ON THE OTHER HAND, IF THEY PROMISED TOO MUCH OF A PURGE, THERE COULD BE ADDED DISQUIET ON THE RIGHT, AND THERE HAVE ALREADY BEEN SOME RUMORS THAT SOME IN THIS CAMP MIGHT TRY AND POSTPONE OR PREVENT THE ELECTIONS THEMSELVES.

2. CYPRUS WOULD ALSO BE A MAJOR ISSUE, OF COURSE, ALTHOUGH MAVROS DID NOT THINK THAT ANTI-AMERICANSIM AS SUCH WOULD BE A MAJOR FACTOR IN THE PRE-ELECTORAL CAMPAIGN. HE THOUGHT THAT PAPANDREOU AND SOME OTHER OF THAT TYPE WOULD ATTEMPT TO PLAY AN ANTI-AMERICAN CHORD IN THIS PRE-ELECTORAL PERIOD BUT BARRING SOME UNFORESEEN DEVELOPMENT, MAVROS DID NOT EXPECT IT TO BECOME A DOMINATING ISSUE IN THE CAMPAIGN.

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3. MAVROS INDICATED THAT HE AND CARAMANLIS AND THEIR TWO POLITICAL GROUPINGS HAD ALREADY REACHED AGREEMENT TO FORM A COALITION GOVERNMENT FOLLOWING THE ELECTIONS. HE ASKED ME WHAT PERCENTAGE OF THE VOTE I THOUGHT THE TWO OF THEM WOULD GET. I REPLIED THAT I WAS RATHER NEWLY ARRIVED IN GREECE AND DIDN'T REALLY FEEL QUALIFIED TO MAKE AN EXPERT ESTIMATE. HE SAID THAT THERE WERE EXPERTS IN THE EMBASSY AND IN OTHER EMBASSIES OR OTHER FOREIGN OBSERVERS HERE WITH WHOM I MAY HAVE DISCUSSED THIS AND WHO MIGHT HAVE A VIEW ON THIS. I SAID THAT THERE SEEMED TO BE A GENERAL VIEW THAT HE AND CARMANLIS WOULD BET NOT LESS THAN 60 O/O OF THE VOTE AND PROBABLY A HIGHER FRACTION THAN THAT OF THE TOTAL SEATS. MAVROS IMMEDIATELY REPLIED THAT THAT WAS TOO CONSERVATIVE. HE SAID THAT BETWEEN HIM AND CARAMANLIS THEY WOULD OBTAIN BETWEEN 70 AND 75 O/O OF THE VOTE AND THAT IT WAS NOT INCONCEIVABLE THAT CARAMANLIS AND HIS PARTY, WHILE OBTAINING PERHAPS ONLY 40 OR 45 O/O OF THE POPULAR VOTE, MIGHT RECEIVE, AS A RESULT OF THE PROPORTIONAL REPRESENTATION SYSTEM, AN ABSOLUTE MAJORITY OF THE 300 PARLIAMENTARY SEATS. EVEN SO, MAVROS WENT ON, HE AND CARAMANLIS HAD AGREED THAT THEY WOULD COMBINE FORCES IN THE POST-ELECTORAL PERIOD. MAVROS DID NOT THINK HE HIMSELF HAD ANY CHANCE OF OUT-DISTANCING CARAMANLIS IN THE ELECTIONS THEMSELVES.

4. MAVROS EXPECTED THAT THE PARTIES TO THE LEFT OF HIS CENTER UNION GROUPING PROBABLY WOULD NOT RECEIVE MORE THAN 15-17 O/O OF THE VOTE, WHICH WAS THEIR MORE OR LESS TRADITIONAL AMOUNT. THIS WOULD LEAVE 8-10 O/O FOR THE EXTREME RIGHT AND MISCELLANEOUS SMALL ELEMENTS. I POINTED OUT THAT THERE HAD NOT BEEN ELECTIONS IN GREECE SINCE 1963 AND A GREAT NUMBER OF GREEKS BETWEEN AGE 21 AND 34 HAD NOT HAD THE OPPORTUNITY TO EXPRESS THEIR PREFERENCES IN AN ELECTION. I WONDERED WHETHER THIS MIGHT FORESHADOW SOME MAJOR SURPRISES. MAVROS SAID HE DID NOT THINK SO.

5. IN RESPONSE TO MY QUESTION, MAVROS SAID HE HAD NOT YET MADE A FINAL DECISION WHETHER OR NOT HE WOULD RESIGN AS FOREIGN MINISTER BEFORE THE ELECTIONS OR WHETHER HE WOULD REMAIN IN THE CURRENT CARETAKER ADMINISTRATION. HE SAID HE WOULD MAKE UP HIS MIND EARLY NEXT WEEK. HE WOULD LIKE TO CONTINUE AS FOREIGN MINISTER BUT HE WAS AFRAID THAT THIS WOULD PREVENT HIM FROM THE

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KIND OF VIGOROUS CAMPAIGNING AND LEADERSHIP OF HIS PARTY THAT HE WANTED TO PROVIDE DURING THE PRE-ELECTORAL PERIOD. IF HE DID RESIGN, HE SAID THAT HE AND CARAMANLIS HAD AGREED THAT MINISTER OF DEFENSE AVEROFF WOULD ALSO BE DESIGNATED TO ACT AS FOREIGN MINISTER. IN ADDITION, UNDER SECRETARY BITSIOS WOULD ALSO BE AVAILABLE TO OVERSEE THE OPERATIONS OF THE FOREIGN MINISTRY DURING THE COMING WEEKS. IN THAT CONNECTION, HE SAID THAT BITSIOS WOULD BE GOING TO NEW YORK ON OCT. 21 FOR ABOUT

FIVE DAYS TO BE PRESENT DURING THE DEBATE ON CYPRUS.

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 2 OF 2 ATHENS 7463

EXDIS

6. WE DISCUSSED THE PLANNED REFERENDUM TO DETERMINE THE NATURE OF THE GOVERNMENT WHICH WILL FOLLOW THE NOV. 17 ELECTIONS--THAT IS, WHETHER GREECE WILL HAVE A "CROWNED DEMOCRACY" WITH THE RETURN OF KING CONSTANTINE OR WHETHER IT WILL FOLLOW A PRESIDENTIAL SYSTEM. MAVROS SAID THAT CARAMANLIS HAD DECIDED TO BE "ABSOLUTELY NEUTRAL" ON THIS MATTER AND THAT HE WOULD NEITHER ADVOCATE NOR OPPOSE THE RETURN OF KING CONSTANTINE. BOTH MAVROS AND I AGREED THAT IN ABSENCE OF STRONG ADVOCACY AND SUPPORT BY CARAMANLIS FOR A MONARCHY AND CONSTANTINE'S RETURN, IT APPEARED UNLIKELY THAT THE PEOPLE OF GREECE WOULD OPT FOR A "CROWNED DEMOCRACY."

7. I SAID IF THE GREEK PEOPLE CHOSE A PRESIDENTIAL SYSTEM HOW WOULD HE AND CARAMANLIS ENVISION ITS ESTABLISHMENT AND WHO WOULD OCCUPY THE PRINCIPAL OFFICES. MAVROS SAID THAT CARAMANLIS WOULD OF COURSE BECOME THE PRESIDENT. I ASKED HIM IF HE WOULD THEN SERVE AS PRIME MINISTER. HE SAID HE DID NOT KNOW--ALTHOUGH HE GAVE EVERY INDICATION OF BELIEVING HE WOULD--AND VOLUNTEERED THAT HE AND CARAMANLIS HAD NEVER DISCUSSED THIS POINT, THAT IT WAS OBVIOUSLY "VERY DELICATE."

8. COMMENT: MAVROS WAS ABOUT AS RELAXED AND COHERENT IN THIS TETE-A-TETE AS I HAVE EVER SEEN HIM. HE SEEMED FORTHCOMING AND FRANK--AND CONFIDENT ABOUT HIS OWN PROSPECTS AND THOSE OF HIS PARTY.

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